



February 11, 2016

Appropriations Committee Public Hearing Testimony

Sarah A. Raskin, PhD ABPP/ABCN

Good Evening Chairpersons and Members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Sarah Raskin and I am a neuropsychologist and faculty member at Trinity College. My work involves research into ways to improve the lives of people with brain injury. I have had the honor of facilitating a support group through the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut for 15 years and am currently serving on the Board of Directors. I would like to submit testimony in opposition to THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS. In his proposal, the Governor seeks to reduce or eliminate funding for important core services of the Department, including funding for the **Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut.**

Over the past 30 years, I have witnessed services for people with brain injury dwindle. Twenty years ago the average stay for on a rehabilitation hospital unit for person after a traumatic brain injury was six months. It is now 20 days for acute care and 30 days for rehabilitation care. The vast majority of those with injuries are sent home with no further treatment. The severity of impact of these injuries has not changed, however. These include children, veterans, mothers, fathers, and other hard-working people.

So, what happens, then, when people go home after having a brain injury? Typically they are in need of considerable services, including rehabilitation and counseling. Frequently they are unable to work and personal relationships are strained. There is nowhere in this state for them to get information about their condition, obtain essential services, find out about what other services are available, or talk to others in similar situations, other than the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut. Without the Brain Injury Alliance, I have no doubt that rates of re-hospitalization and re-injury due to unresolved physical and cognitive conditions will go way up, leading to much greater costs to the state.

The Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut (BIAC) is the first, and often, the only source for information and services. I have seen first-hand many individuals for whom the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut was their only hope, their only guide through a long and difficult process. Brain injury affects not just the body but also a person's ability to think, remember, pay attention or problem-solve. It can affect one's very personality.

I have worked with a young veteran who needed help obtaining special services when he returned to college, a young woman who needed to be retrained for return to work, and an older man trying to understand his benefits all find the help they needed from the Brain Injury Alliance. If BIAC's contract

with DSS would end, DSS would no longer have the mechanism to provide these essential services required as part of the ABI Medicaid Waiver.

In his budget summary, the Governor incorrectly asserts that for years the budget “*automatically funds every activity or line item previously funded, with increases for inflation...*” This is simply not true. BIAC has not received any increase in our contract in over 10 years and actually currently received 13% less than we received in 2008.

- For over 30 years, BIAC has received an operating grant from the Department of Social Services to provide ***entirely free*** resources and supports which the State is unable to provide.
- The Department of Social Services contracts with BIAC to provide services required as part of the Medicaid ABI Waiver program. **The contract with BIAC is used as evidence in several sections of the Waiver application showing that DSS is meeting the obligations of this federal program.** BIAC’s responsibilities ***according to the ABI Waiver Application submitted to the Centers for Medicaid Services (CMS)*** include:
 - Supporting the participant in Service Plan Development and providing information regarding participant direction
 - Disseminating information to the community related to brain injury.
 - Facilitating free monthly support groups throughout Connecticut
 - Statewide toll free support number, providing consultation and resource facilitation for persons who have sustained a brain injury, their families, caregivers and providers
 - Training and community education programs
 - Through BIAC, information about the identification and reporting of abuse, neglect is disseminated to clients, families, and their representatives.
- **In the amendments to both Waivers which has recently been proposed by DSS, BIAC is the only organization approved to provide advanced training for case managers.**
- **No one else does what BIAC does, including the Department of Social Services (DSS),** which is why DSS contracts with BIAC to provide the many essential services that it is not equipped to offer. BIAC meets the needs of the State’s brain injury survivors on behalf of DSS as efficiently as it does effectively.
 - BIAC provides all services at a fraction of what it would cost DSS to provide these services.
 - BIAC’s work on behalf of DSS reduces the brain injury-related workload at DSS.
 - BIAC provides critical training and consultation to most of the State key agencies- including DSS, VA, DCF, DPH, DOE, DOC, DMHAS, DDS, and BRS.
- If BIAC’s contract with DSS would end, **DSS would no longer have the mechanism to provide these essential services required as part of the ABI Medicaid Waiver and needed for compliance with CMS.** BIAC’s services only cost the state \$114,460 last year. Despite a staggering increase in calls to BIAC’s helpline and requests for assistance from DSS over the past 15 years, BIAC has only seen its contract reduced.

Despite every effort to control costs and to seek additional sources of funding, it will increasingly become more difficult for BIAC to meet the obligations of our contract, including the mandated requirement for new training, without additional funding. We are seeking the reinstatement of our contract related funding that has been removed through attrition as well as a small amount of additional funding so we can meet our mandated obligations under the requirements of our state contract.

As veteran's return from combat, an aging population experiences strokes and falls, and rates of motor vehicle related injuries continue to climb the need for the services provided by the Brain Injury Alliance are apparent each and every day.

Please create a line item for the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut to at least \$150,000.

Thank you

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah A. Raskin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial 'S'.

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